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BUSH SENDS MESSAGE OF HOPE TO MIDDLE EAST

United States is not waging war with Islam, he says . 1

BUSH NAMES SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR

Resolving humanitarian crisis tops U.N. agenda 3

U.S. URGES IRAN TO HALT NUCLEAR PROGRAM, RESUME NEGOTIATIONS

International community remains united on threat of
sanctions, officials say 4

GLOBAL NUCLEAR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP COULD HELP MEET ENERGY NEEDS

Energy Secretary Bodman outlines conditions for
maximum nuclear power benefits..... 6

BUSH SENDS MESSAGE OF HOPE TO MIDDLE EAST

United States is not waging war with Islam, he
says

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- Speaking directly to the people of the Middle East from the podium of the U.N. General Assembly, President Bush urged them and their governments to support democracy and moderation and assured them that the United States is not at war with Islam.

"My country desires peace," the president said. "Extremists in your midst spread propaganda claiming that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. This propaganda is false and its purpose is to confuse you and justify acts of terror.

"We respect Islam, but we will protect our people from those who pervert Islam to sow death and destruction," he said.

The goal of the United States, Bush said, "is to help you build a more tolerant and hopeful society that honors people of all faiths and promotes the peace."

In his sixth address to the opening of the General Assembly since he took office, the president emphasized his agenda for freedom and rejection of terrorism, especially his positive vision for the Middle East. Contrary to opinions in some quarters, democratic changes in the Middle East are not destabilizing the

region, Bush said. "The stability we thought we saw in the Middle East was a mirage," he said. "For decades, millions of men and women in the region have been trapped in oppression and hopelessness, and these conditions left a generation disillusioned and made this region a breeding ground for extremism."

The president pointed out the results of dramatic change in the region: a democratically elected President Hamid Karzai sat in Afghanistan's seat at the U.N. session; a democratic government in Iraq was represented by President Jalal Talabani.

Bush praised Iraqis for braving car bombers and assassins to vote and said, "We will not abandon your struggle to build a free nation. ... We will not yield the future of your country to terrorist and extremists."

The United States and its partners will continue to stand with the government and "continue to help you secure the international assistance and investment you need to create jobs and opportunity," Bush said.

The president also praised the people of Afghanistan for their courage and determination to live in peace and freedom.

"Forces from more than 40 countries, including members of the NATO alliance, are bravely serving side by side with you against the extremists who want to bring down the free government you've established. We'll help you defeat these enemies and build a free Afghanistan that will never again oppress you or be a safe haven for terrorists," Bush said.

Although the president praised the people of Lebanon for freeing themselves from Syrian domination and highlighted elections in Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen and Egypt, he had harsh words for the leaders of Iran and Syria who, he said, are increasing their countries' isolation from the world.

Iran must abandon its ambitions for nuclear weapons, Bush said. "The United Nations has passed a clear resolution requiring that the regime in Tehran meet its international obligations."

The president spoke directly to Iranians, saying that their future faces obstacles because "your rulers have chosen to deny you liberty and to use your nation's resources to fund terrorism and fuel extremism and pursue nuclear weapons."

To the people of Syria, Bush said, "your land is home to a great people with a proud tradition of learning and commerce. Today your rulers have allowed your country to become a crossroad for terrorism. In your midst, Hamas and Hezbollah are working to destabilize the region and your government is turning your country into a tool of Iran."

The Syrian government must end its support for terror and live at peace with its neighbors, he said.

"The more hopeful world that is within our reach, a world beyond terror where ordinary men and women are free to determine their own destiny, where the voices of moderation are empowered and where the extremists are marginalized by the peaceful majority. This world can be ours if we seek it and if we work together," he said.

The president's message to the Middle East was well received in the General Assembly hall, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Kristin Silverberg told the Washington File in an interview after the president's speech.

She said that many delegations reacted very positively to both the president's hopeful vision for the Middle East and the United States' positive freedom agenda.

"Addressing his comments directly to the people living under some repressive regimes and also to people living in emerging and newer democracies was a powerful message," Silverberg said.

Text of the president's address to the General Assembly and a fact sheet on that address are available on the White House Web site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060919-4.html>

BUSH NAMES SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR

Resolving humanitarian crisis in Sudan tops U.N. agenda

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- President Bush has named Andrew Natsios, former administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), as a presidential special envoy to lead U.S. efforts to bring peace to the Darfur region in Sudan.

In his speech at the opening of the 61st U.N. General Assembly, the president focused on Darfur, addressing his remarks directly to the people of the region. "You have suffered unspeakable violence, and my nation has called these atrocities what they are -- genocide," Bush said.

"The world must step forward to provide additional humanitarian aid, and we must strengthen the African Union force that has done good work but is not strong enough to protect you," he said.

If the Sudanese government does not accept a transition from the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force to the larger, more robust U.N. peacekeeping operation in Darfur quickly, the president said, "the United Nations must act" because thousands of lives and the credibility of the United Nations are at stake.

The president also called on the international community "to step forward to provide additional humanitarian aid" and asked NATO to strengthen the AU force (AMIS) while it remains in Darfur.

With world leaders at U.N. headquarters for the assembly, diplomats see the week of September 18 as a critical one opportunity for focusing attention on Darfur and for convincing Sudanese officials to change their position on a U.N. peacekeeping force for the region.

The United States has submitted a draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council that would extend the mandate of the U.N. Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for another six months.

UNMIS was established by the council in 2005 (Resolution 1590) to support the peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army to help with humanitarian aid and guard against human rights abuses. Resolution 1706, adopted by the council on August 31, 2006, expanded the mandate of UNMIS to include Darfur and instructed the U.N. secretary-general to speed up planning for an expanded force in the region. (See related article.)

The Security Council is planning to meet September 22 with Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who is opposing the deployment of the 20,000 peacekeepers and police units in Darfur under U.N. command.

"We deplore the ongoing violence in Darfur and the consequent deterioration of the humanitarian situation," U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said September 18. "At this critical juncture, it is imperative that the Security Council reiterate the need for the transition of AMIS to a United Nations operation."

It is critical that the missions be expanded concurrently to ensure the urgent assistance to AMIS is not jeopardized, Bolton said.

Bolton said that just as Sudan's Government of National Unity was able to overcome decades of violence in southern Sudan by respecting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and cooperating with UNMIS, so should Khartoum be prepared to ensure a better future for its citizens in Darfur through the Darfur Peace Agreement and cooperation in the deployment of U.N. forces in Darfur.

“The notion that Sudan is not going to accept the presence of a U.N. peacekeeping force is something we don’t find to be credible,” Bolton said.

Peace activists held “Save Darfur” rallies around the world September 17 in an effort to highlight the desperate situation. “The world must act and it must do it now because time is not on our side,” former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told an estimated crowd of 30,000 in New York City’s Central Park.

Senator Norm Coleman, a Republican from Minnesota, and Senator Barbara Boxer, a Democrat from California -- members of the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly -- stressed that both major U.S. political parties are united on Darfur.

“Quite often we find ourselves on different sides on a number of issues, but on the issue of the importance of dealing with the genocide of Darfur we stand united. There is absolutely no question about it,” Coleman said after meeting with Sudan’s ambassador to the United Nations September 18.

“We need increased focus and attention to this issue. Resolution of these issues is often complex, there are nuances and layers, but the reality of this is genocide, is not complex. It’s very clear ... it simply has to be done,” Coleman said.

Boxer added that Americans and people around the world have shown great compassion by taking the time to rally, speak and raise funds. “To the very brave NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and U.N. personnel who are going in there, we can only say thank you for keeping this issue on the agenda of the world,” she said.

Having lost many family members during the Holocaust, Boxer said, she knows that “shining the light of truth on these inhumane acts is the first step to stopping them.”

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour has reported that, despite the May peace accord, the situation in Darfur has worsened steadily, with human rights abuses being committed on a large scale by government forces, the marauding Jingaweit militias and rebel groups.

The high commissioner told the Human Rights Council in Geneva that there is a “continued and clear failure or unwillingness” by the government to hold the perpetrators of horrific crimes accountable.

UNICEF says that more than 400,000 have lost their lives, some 2 million more have been driven from their homes in Darfur in the last three years and nearly 3 million depend on international aid for food, shelter and basic health needs.

U.S. URGES IRAN TO HALT NUCLEAR PROGRAM, RESUME NEGOTIATIONS

International community remains united on threat of sanctions, officials say

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States is prepared to enter into diplomatic discussions with Iran for the first time since the 1979 hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran if Iran verifiably suspends its uranium enrichment activities.

“We have said that if Iran is prepared to suspend [uranium enrichment], we are prepared for the first time in decades to sit down across the table from the Iranians and talk about ending their nuclear ambitions and providing a path for Iran’s entry into the international system,” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a media interview in New York September 19. “I would meet anywhere with my counterpart at any time once Iran has suspended its enrichment and reprocessing activities.”

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns underscored the importance of this historic offer during September 19 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington.

“No prior administration, Republican or Democrat, had made that offer in 27 years,” he said. “We’re willing to do it on the nuclear issue because we see the nuclear issue as uniquely dangerous to our country and to our allies in the Middle East.”

Burns invoked a baseball metaphor to explain to the senators that discussions between Iran and the international community have moved into “extra innings” [the procedure used to break a tie] since the August 31 expiration of the U.N. Security Council’s deadline for Iran to halt its nuclear program. He said he expects Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, to attend the proceedings of the U.N. General Assembly in New York this week and meet with European leaders who are trying to convince Iran to pursue the path of negotiations.

“So the Iranians have a clear choice to make. That choice is in New York this week,” he said. “And we very much hope that Iran will make the right choice so that negotiations can proceed and diplomacy can proceed.”

“But should that not be the case -- and since we’re in extra innings, we can’t wait forever, and there’s a very short time line here -- then President Bush and Secretary Rice as recently as this morning said publicly that we will seek to impose a sanctions regime on the Iranian government,” he said.

The Security Council adopted Resolution 1696 on July 31 demanding that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment by August 31 or face the possibility of economic and diplomatic sanctions. Burns said that the resolution commits those governments that voted for it “to a course of sanctions under Article 41, Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, should Iran not meet this basic condition. ... And so we assume and we believe that all the governments that voted for that resolution back on July 31 will honor it.” He said that moving ahead with a sanctions resolution at this time is a matter of credibility for the Security Council.

Burns explained that the sanctions would be graduated with the first phase focusing on the Iranian leadership and on dual-use exports that Iran might use to advance its nuclear program. “We believe we have unity among the Perm Five countries and Germany to do this. And as recently as yesterday afternoon, that unity was in place,” he said. The “Perm Five” countries, the five permanent members of the Security Council, are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Germany also has been deeply engaged in discussions about the Iranian nuclear program.

Burns said that the coalition of countries dealing with Iran is operating from diverse positions but remains unified on the key issues. “It’s a coalition of countries with sometimes different interests. I can’t say that Russia and China see the Iranian nuclear issue exactly as we do, but we held together at the key junctures over the last 12 months,” he said.

French President Jacques Chirac also put to rest speculations that France was diverging from other members of the coalition after a September 19 meeting with U.S. President George Bush. Both leaders underscored that they share the same objective and same approach in dealing with Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Bush said European countries would remain engaged with Iran to convince it to suspend its nuclear program and return to negotiations, but he said if Iran continues to stall, the coalition of countries engaged in the matter would move ahead with sanctions.

Clarifying his position, Chirac suggested that the suspension of Iran’s enrichment program and a suspension of action within the Security Council should be simultaneous measures preceding a resumption of negotiations.

Burns said that the United States already has begun taking measures to isolate Iran economically.

“We are working with the financial community worldwide to impress upon them the cost of doing business with Iran,” he said. “And we’re making the case that Iran is not a good risk for further investment in any field, and we’re beginning to see banks decide that they will not continue with new lending to Iran, and some European and Asian banks actually curtailing their operations quite significantly.”

He said there is a good chance that economic sanctions could convince Iran to change its course of action because Iran is deeply involved in international trade and seeks integration into the world economy.

He also spoke about the dynamic complexity of political currents within Iran and speculated that there are moderates who might be more inclined to work with the international community than to defy it.

“This is a country undergoing a vast transformation in the way that it views itself,” he said. “What we hope will emerge is an Iranian government that realizes that a policy of the type espoused by Ahmadi-Nejad -- of aggressive behavior in the region which has a lot of the Arab countries very concerned, a clear effort to create a nuclear weapons capability, and a clear effort to continue the funding of terrorist groups -- that’s going to create a vast international coalition against Iran.”

GLOBAL NUCLEAR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP COULD HELP MEET ENERGY NEEDS

Energy Secretary Bodman outlines conditions for maximum nuclear power benefits

Washington -- President Bush’s proposal to make nuclear fuel accessible to all governments that forego uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing could meet the world’s growing energy demands, limit carbon emissions and reduce proliferation dangers, according to Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman.

Addressing a general session of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria, Bodman quoted the president saying that the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership could “ensure that cheap, safe, and clean nuclear energy and its benefits are enjoyed by all who are in compliance with their nonproliferation obligations.” (See related article.)

The secretary said world energy needs are met today primarily by using coal, natural gas and oil to generate electrical power. “But nuclear energy provides a host of benefits fossil fuels cannot match,” Bodman said.

The secretary said four conditions must be present to achieve the maximum benefit from nuclear power:

- Nuclear power must be competitive with fossil fuels in generating electricity;
- Nuclear waste and spent fuel must be disposed of responsibly;
- Nuclear power must be safe; and
- The firmest safeguards over nuclear materials must be maintained.

Regarding disposal, he said the U.S. Energy Department wants to open a mountain repository for nuclear waste and spent fuel by 2017, and praised the progress Sweden and Finland are making in pursuing geologic repositories.

Bodman said the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, along with a Russian proposal to establish international nuclear fuel service centers (starting with one in Russia) “share the same goal: to facilitate the global expansion of nuclear power to meet growing energy demands, limit carbon emissions, and reduce proliferation dangers.”

The U.S. proposal through GNEP is “to develop and deploy advanced technologies for recycling spent nuclear fuel that do not result in separated plutonium,” Bodman said. The goal is a multilateral effort to develop advanced, proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors suited to the energy needs of developing economies.

Though different proposals have been made for the future of nuclear power, he said, there is consensus that an international mechanism to assure an adequate supply of reactor fuel is critical both to meeting the world's energy needs and to advancing nonproliferation goals.

Bodman said the United States plans to work with the IAEA and any others willing to construct a framework to guarantee fuel at fair market rates, and to accommodate the storage, transport and processing of spent fuel.

He called for the IAEA, with U.S. help, to facilitate supplier-recipient contacts, promote the use of technological advances and help countries develop the expertise needed for effective use of nuclear energy.

An assured fuel supply "would considerably increase the energy independence, and thus political and strategic independence, of all nations, particularly smaller ones," Bodman said.

Pleases Note: Most texts and transcript mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/> - Then select "Washington File" from the top menu bar.